

## History of the Brighton Mills and Model School War Monuments

**SEPTEMBER 2, 1945**, news from the Battleship Missouri reached Shannon, and the whole world, that Japan had surrendered, and that *“the War is over”*. General Douglas MacArthur told Americans what they had longed to hear about their girls and boys: “They are homeward bound—Take care of them”, he said.

**THE MILL’S WHISTLE**, atop the Brighton plant, went off in a nonstop burst. On and on it continued, as people came out of their houses, stopped what they were doing, and rejoiced throughout the community over the great news. There had been 408 employees of the Brighton Plant, called into service during the WWII Conflict... and twelve of those would not be coming home. MacArthur had said to “Take care of them”, and so it would be, also, for these twelve. They would be officially memorialized and forever remembered.

**MR. JULIAN K. MORRISON**, a great Community benefactor and the CEO of Brighton Mills, facilitated the erection of a fitting monument at the flagpole in front of the Company’s plant. Its dedication was held in November 1946, the very next year after the ending of WWII. It was one of the area’s best attended events, ever. There were hundreds, if not thousands, in attendance at that somber event.

**IT HAS LONG SINCE BEEN CLAIMED**, and yet to be disputed, that this was the first WWII monument erected in our Nation.. It was so near after the ending of the War that bronze was still not available for the plaque. So the one at the dedication had to be made of wood, then later replaced with bronze once the metal became available. Both the wood and bronze plaques are on display each Memorial Day.

**ONLY SIX MONTHS PASSED** after Nov. 1946 before this same Mr. Morrison erected, and dedicated, what is probably the second oldest WWII monument at the campus of Model School. This monument was in memory of the Community’s Jesse Lamar McKellar, Jr. who had not been included on the Brighton Plaque due to his having never been an employee of Brighton Mills.

**IT WOULD BE ANOTHER HALF CENTURY** before any scheduled events or remembrances of these two monuments would occur. The Model School was moved to a new site in the late Eighties, and the McKellar plaque removed and placed in storage. Then the Shannon Optimist Club re-erected it, along with a matching monument with four additional names of Model School War dead, at the new Model Campus. The Model School monuments were dedicated on Memorial Day of 1997. Immediately following the Model Ceremony, the event moved to Shannon where the Brighton Memorial was then eulogized. This was the beginning of the annual Memorial Day ceremonies now held each year at Shannon’s Brighton Monument.

**THE MODEL SCHOOL MONUMENTS** were once again moved in 2011 when a new high school was built on the spot where they had been. They are now very appropriately located at the Flagpole on a plaza east of the new building. JD